

USA, Project Apollo: Questions answered

This document contains the answers to some of the most frequently asked questions posed by consumer-centric holistic measurement initiatives looking to get started. The answers were kindly provided by the project owner(s). This is one of several documents designed to help others learn from existing initiatives' experiences.

Roughly how much did each stage of your initiative cost to set up?

Project Apollo was a major initiative with multiple stages. Arbitron, as the public record states, invested \$25 million USD in Project Apollo over a 2 ½ year period. Nielsen also invested, but as a private company, its costs are not public.

How did you come to agreement regarding finding and how was it broken out?

Arbitron and Nielsen believed in the promise of single source measurement and felt the environment was right to explore a joint effort to test such a service. As a joint effort, Project Apollo was organized as a Limited Liability Corporation (LLC), where the partners, Arbitron and Nielsen, shared funding equally.

Did you achieve industry consensus in advance of starting your project?

Several major advertisers, mostly publicly Procter & Gamble, were supportive of the objectives of the Project Apollo test. The potential of Project Apollo to address many questions around how advertising works led to sustained publicity. But Arbitron and Nielsen chose to invest in the project and started the test using their own resources. Six major advertisers became sponsors early in the test: Kraft Foods, Johnson & Johnson, Pepsi, Procter & Gamble, SC Johnson, and Unilever. Wal-Mart joined the project several months later.

How did you organize ownership of this initiative?

Legally, Project Apollo was an LLC with Arbitron and Nielsen as owners. A partners' committee was established to govern the LLC. On an operating basis, there were representatives from both Arbitron and Nielsen working on the project. Both companies worked semi-independently to produce key components of the service. For instance, Nielsen's Homescan unit ran the panel and processed the purchase data. Arbitron managed the media data from the PPMs embedded within the Homescan panel. There was joint decision making and day-to-day oversight of the entire process by a core team comprised of members from both companies.

Just as importantly, from a service development standpoint, there was a group comprised of the sponsors; the Project Apollo Steering Committee. The members of this group were designated by the sponsors and included personnel from each company. Most of the advertiser sponsors also chose to include a member from their agency as a part of their team. This group met every 8-10 weeks throughout the life of the project and played an important and varied role: product development feedback, consensus building, problem solving, and interaction with the wider advertising community. They also generously shared with one another, even while mindful of competitive and legal boundaries.

Did you have a specific approach for: Advertisers? Agencies? Media owners?

a) Advertisers were the crux of the business model for Project Apollo. The service was designed to achieve significant gains in marketing effectiveness, through improvement in media performance. Advertisers were to be the primary financial support for Project Apollo had it moved from testing to a commercial service.

b) Agencies were important to the Apollo model as some of the Project Apollo information would directly influence the planning process. The business model allowed for agency access to Project Apollo data for the agencies' clients (advertisers) that subscribed to Project Apollo.

c) Our goal was to provide a service for media owners to allow them to position their product using the Project Apollo single source data set. We did not realize this goal within the timeframe of the test. While we expected media owners to utilize the service, we did not expect the media to carry the majority of the financial support of Project Apollo.

Were there any barriers not mentioned above and how did you overcome them?

Project Apollo did not reach the support goals needed to commercialize the service. The price/value curve - how much information, how usable, how readily monetized it would be – was a hurdle. Project Apollo opted for a high quality single source model, one that required a multimillion-dollar investment by advertisers. We did not overcome this issue.

For more information regarding Project Apollo contact either:

Kelly Mead, Senior Account Manager, Marketing & Products, The Nielsen Company. kelly.mead@nielsen.com

Linda Dupree, EVP, PPM New Product Development, Arbitron. linda.dupree@arbitron.com

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